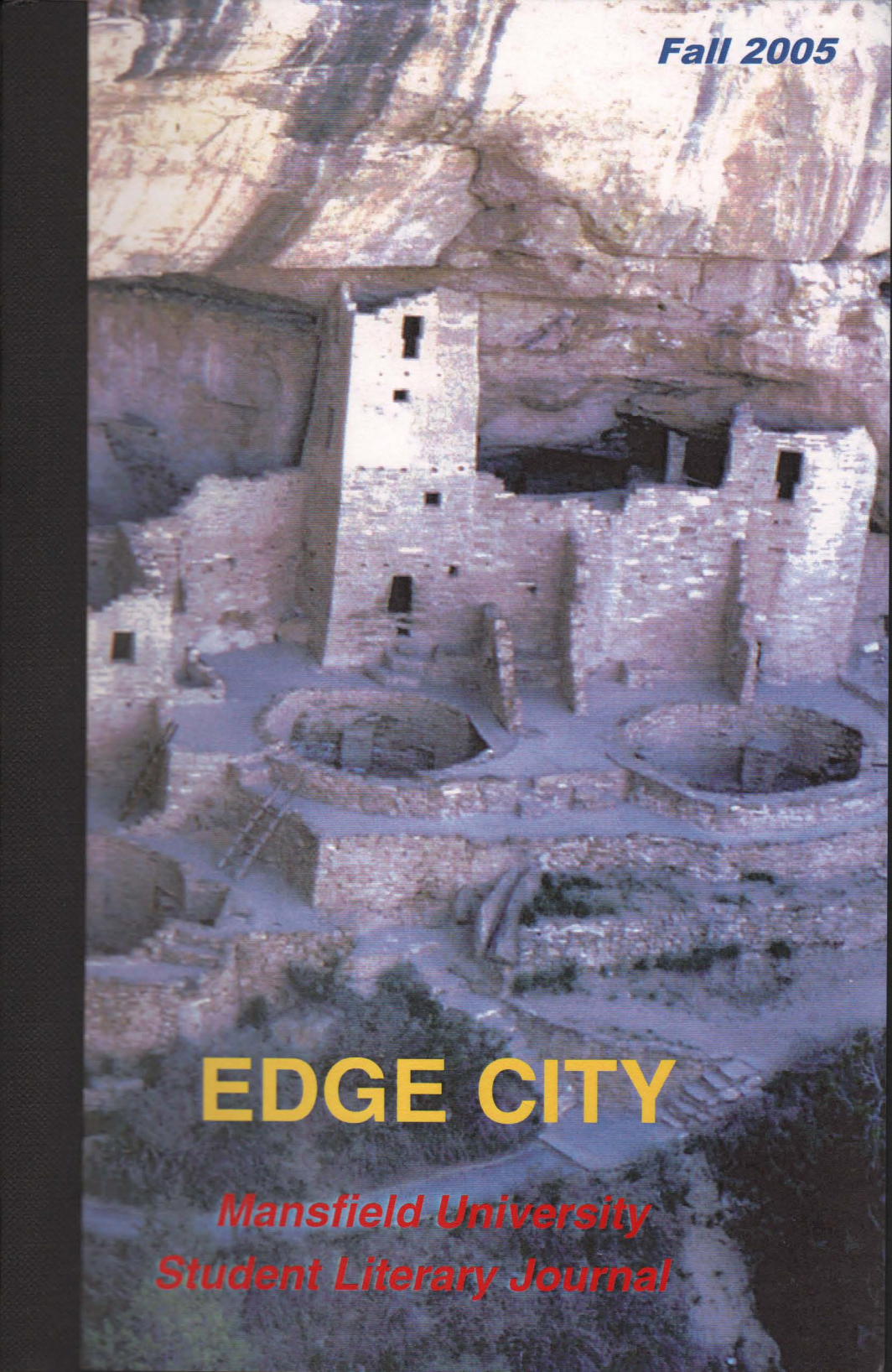




Fall 2005

EDGE CITY

***Mansfield University
Student Literary Journal***

Edge City 2005

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Vivir y Morir (To Live and To Die)

For Kahlo and Rivera

Stephanie Stambaugh

She is what she is
black braids woven
encircling the mind
strands of the past
imagined and existed
her dark brow creased from looking
at the body reflected
languishing upon white linens
dotted with blood
brown ink, damar, amarillo
painted memories of her body
wrapped in bandages, wrapped in Diego
his body consuming, enfolding, devouring
her bed scented of sex and lemons
she mixes an emulsion of color
her lips red from his last kiss
wet from tears
tears of pain
tears of the revolution
tears the day Stalin died
tears that flowed down Teotihuacán
steps of a pyramid that led to her ancestors
if she could only fly to their resting place
luna the moon, sol the sun
two Fridas, one dead, tortured and broken
clotted, amputated
one alive flowering and fragrant
jeweled, laced, skirt flowing
as a guitar plays and the Zapatista
sing their way past the window
past the metamorphosis

the milagros at the feet of the Savior

the prayers and skeletons

wine and water, candles

and feast in the night

Los Dias de los Muertos

offerings to the ancient ones

offerings to the past

bound like the wrappings

of Nefertiti and Akhenaten

both in their shrouds

bound by the book of the dead

the wheel chair

the promise of the resurrection

for the dead shall rise again

and again, and again,

operation after operation,

protest after protest,

until the voice of death

drowns out the voice of life on earth

and the pain becomes a souvenir

as Gibran the prophet reads

to Frida from the other side

“when the earth shall claim your limbs,

then shall you truly dance.”

and unable to resist she rises

from her death bed, the linen cocoon

she ascends walking upon both legs now,

perfected, back straight, breasts soft and brown

hair undone cascading black and sleek

the two Fridas united

she leaves the room behind

in search of the brother, the lover

Diego the revolutionary

the Aztec warrior surrendered

his body the traitor, the infidel

captured until her touch upon

his heart unlocks the prison cell

his patriot blood flows again
through his veins, through her fingertips
creators, color-bearers they give birth
their child is the palette
the terracotta of the earth, the gold of the sun
the surrealist's mural unfolds as heaven
the blue house and cactus green
and welcoming them into the manifold
laborers with outstretched arms
calling them into the painter's alchemy
the amalgamation, the ascension, *vivir y morir*.

Specific Weight

Joe Callahan

It's a lull, I tell her, that's it, just a slight dip,
And the pendulum will come swinging back again,
Because that's the way these things
Almost always work.

The real criminal here, I tell her,
.. Is gravity, for always pulling me downward toward some
Unseen center, designating specific weight
To all my unbearable particles.

I fear it might take a crane just to
Lift my body off the bed, an act of god
To get me outside to my car in the morning,
Let alone into the shower, or into some clothes.

What I really want to tell her, though, is that
I am tired of listening to everything
My body has to say. It's a terrible thing
To carry one around with you all the time.

A Couple of Father/Son Moments

Joe Callahan

* (One, "The Beach")

We ask her the time.
And there is the orange,
Long-shadowed sunset behind her.

In sunglasses,
Coyly turning up her wrist,
She says, The time?

My dad
Hitting on women
At the beach.

He wears socks,
Hates the feeling of sand
Between his toes.

He is almost forty
And I am almost eighteen.
I will never get used to this.

* (Two, "The Boat")

He said to me,
I cheated on your mother, when you...well,
not really cheated, but...well, yeah,
I guess I cheated.

We were riding across a lake
on a large boat filled with other tourists.
It skimmed across the lake's surface,
sending ripples receding out toward the shore.

* (Three, "The Theory")
He said to me once
The purpose of your life
Is to provide
For your children's children.

Everything you do
Should be done
With only their livelihood in mind.
The money you make in this life

Should be enough
To support them
For the rest of theirs
And longer.

And it is just now that
I am beginning to realize
That he was always
A very, very unhappy person.

To fin with the hopeless grin

Colleen Alexander

Your evil plot worked
You pinched my being
And put it in your destructive trap
Let me draw you a little map...
Destroy her to lift yourself and
Put her on the bottom shelf
Call her every name in the book and
Give her that god awful look
Her pride and dignity you think you took but
Little do you know, all that you say is so
Is just a misdirected blow to that soul you keep hidden below.
Have you no kindness?
Your insecurity is your blindness.
Your future I pray for and
My heart you tore. Please spare me all the gore.
Your truth is my hell, this story I must tell.
You're never going to score with that loud roar
You're just a misguided whore!
Why don't you shut your trap and
Fill that gap!
I am hopeful that one day you'll see and
Not continue on with ignorant glee while you
Destroy yourself and me.
How are you part of humanity?
Flee! Flee!
Set your mind and heart free for
The sake of
You and me.

Le Ballet des Algue

Christopher Barker

It tears itself free from the retentive bottom
Floats up to be carried by the current
Stagnant is it now slightly swirling in the cesspool
Round and round in endless cycles of monotony
To float is death – sink to be encapsulated, yet live
Live at least with the knowledge of your death
The birds play: chirp chirp tang, chirp chirp tang
The lizards stalk shadows as their lungs go: in out in out in out
The ice settles and I am *startled*, shaken from my daze
Ripped from a tropical jungle to a lowly sewage ditch
Yet look, bubbles from the deep
There is life in sinking

her (part I)

Jon Holz

So here I am a little past midnight, writing worthless thoughts on this stupid machine. I could be writing papers, papers that were due before break. I could be reading something meaningful or even something assigned. But I'm not. Thoughts of her seem to be keeping me up lately at night, and this always manages to be my escape. How many times have I sat here and written countless lines for no one to read? More than I can remember. I don't usually read what I write, nor do I save it. I never send it to her, or even let her know I wrote anything. I haven't seen her in months, but still I see her every day. It seems that she is everywhere in some way or another.

I think back, to when I was so immature that I let other people tell me what to wear, what to do, and pretty much what to think. I'm talking about the summer right before high school, and one day in particular. Ha, I used to think about this girl all the time back then. I thought I was a bad ass because I was a freshman and she was a mere 7th grader. I was an idiot then, and not much has changed. Most of the time I manage to get by without being traumatized by thoughts of what could have been, but then again there are these nights; the nights I find myself writing these stupid autobiographies of a life no one wants to read about. In fact, I don't even have enough audacity to read this jibberish. Jibberish, that's not even a word, but in this kind of writing you can make as many words as you want. It's this great writing movement called modernism, and it pretty much means that as long as you know the rules of grammar, you don't have to use them. See? Jibberish, the mere mention of a made up word spurs a two line babble of definitions 80% of America could give two shits about.

Her, she's the one I was talking about five minutes ago before I began to ramble. She creeps into my life on these lonely nights and it seems like there is nothing in the world that will make her go away. It's not bad, and it's not good either. I love it, and I hate it. You know when that happens right? When there is that one

thought that makes you smile and want to cry all at once. Like graduation, or the end of a sports season or some other sentimental bullshit. Anyway, I love how it makes me remember all the great times we went through. I love how it reminds me of a time when my life was **comfortable**, as she described us. Comfortable is what we were. Maybe too comfortable at times? My dad passed away and I went right to her. I left my family, and I went to her. She wasn't my girlfriend, and she lived almost a half hour away from the hospital where I received the worst news of my life. But I went to her. She held me for three seconds, and I knew somehow everything would be all right. Three seconds, what the hell is wrong with that picture?

There were countless opportunities for her and me. Why do I say countless? Because I can't even begin to think of how many there were. You know what I hate the most? The what-ifs? What if when I was a freshman, I told her she counted for more to me than I ever let her know. What if, I kissed her that day in the hallway and told her how I really felt? What if I asked her out when I had my 1st or 4th chance to do so? What-ifs really suck don't they? I was talking before about what I loved I think, and I love the smile that comes to my face when I think about cuddling up with her. I hate how it keeps me up until 3:00 in the morning, or in last night's case, 4:00 in the morning. I love to write, and I love the fact that she inspires me to write. I love the fact that I write all the time for an audience that never existed, and never will in most cases. I bet I would have over a gig of hard drive space taken up if I saved all of my late night writings; I bet I could write a book or some shit.

Why don't I ever let her read these? I don't know. I don't know why I never read these. I think it has something to do with the fact that just thinking about all this enough to put it on paper almost brings tears to my eyes, and I'm almost positive that her reading this would bring tears to her eyes. I think in the course of our "relationship" I have made her eyes water enough that she need not shed any more tears from my words. We always used to talk about how they were "good tears," when we would send these gay little embarrassed faces over Instant Messenger. You know, the face that's all orange looking, like a 6-year-old girl that got into

mommy's make-up bag; that face. You know what's disgusting, the mere sight of that face makes me smile inside, because of the implications of her and me. I see that face every day, and it's just one more thing that reminds me of her.

What else reminds me of her do you ask? How about the fact that the place I have to practice every day, the place where my team locker room is, the place I spend more time in than any other building here, shares her last name. That's just funny isn't it? I laughed about that when I came on my recruiting visit November 9, 2001. Why do I remember that day? That's the day. The one I talked about before. The three second day. Yeah. That's it. I have this playlist on my computer that I have titled "sleep time" but it should really be her name. It's full of songs that remind me of her. Songs that we listened to together, and songs I can assure you she has never even heard, from bands she will probably never even know. Why does this matter? It doesn't. It's all part of the random thought process that always goes into these.

**two sides of snow's veil or the highway;
my childhood mountain**

Thomas Dalton

Snow falls white, enhancing, impairing all views to the eye.

Enhancing with us left to imagine unseen,
Impairing, for through its hazy gauze I still see
The murdered hill's dried and deep cut ream
Severing deeper through past memory.

Clear, blast, shape, pave, decay, repeat.

And now as I hope for more white through the window,
In spite of myself I must laugh for it's gone;
The snow veil is now but few patches that lay.

First clear, then blast, shape, pave, and decay.

She Disappoints Me in Bed

Mark Haviland

Tonight I wish you could lay by my side
In a peaceful manner, not this rumbling tide.
It frustrates me to hear you this way
While you don't even move, just continue to lay
I'm here wide awake cursing your name
Each night you stay over it's exactly the same.
I'd feel bad to wake you from your happy sleep
But I grit my teeth with each menacing peep
All the different sounds out of one tiny mouth
Like a loud flock of birds, flying quickly down south
I nudge, I poke, I groan to no avail
You're the hammer, and my ear is the nail
I could take my pillow, shove it down on your face
You're a tenor each day, but at night turned bass
Each breath you take, into me it cuts
If you don't stop this snoring, I'm gonna go nutz.

Contemplating Death and Aviation

Joe Callahan

Just now, at 11:11 p.m.
A plane flew overhead, low. And

I looked up at the ceiling,
As if I could see it.

But I could only hear it
Thundering above me. And I wondered

For a moment, if it was crashing—
If its flaming trajectory bound

For our quiet, dark little home.
And I wondered what I would do

If it did. I have to admit that
The first thing I thought about was you.

I also have to admit, though, that
This is the most sentimental I will ever get.

I'm Not Worthy of a Title

Mark Haviland

I'm not the person that you think I am
and I'm not the person that I come off to be
In fact, living a life like mine is too lonely
My advice is simple, my advice is short,
don't be like me, or an ass of my sort

I'm not that tough, or that fierce or mean.
it's just that those are the parts you've seen
I have to admit I hide myself well
but how can I brag about my living hell
Hating myself takes on a daily routine
but it's too hard to start over and wipe the slate clean

There are times when I'm just like everyone else
when a hug and a smile make me feel like new
but the people who see that are a dwindling few
and I go back to barely living, like I always do
I'm a mess, a waste, and at the bottom of the chain
"thinking who would care if myself I slain

People need people and it's no different with me
but only in my depressed state am I able to see
What is a normal life? Or does that exist?
Is it something like heaven or that girl I just kissed?
Do people need me as much as I need them?
and why don't they blow me off like the ass that I am?
I guess they have more patience than I ever could know
My way is simple, I tell them off, then go

I thank those strong people who put up with my crap
How come they deal with my stupidity gap?
At the end of this poem I hate myself more
I'm a feelingless jerk right down to my core
But please don't give up on me, I really do care
It's just that my load is a life hard to bear.

Gray

Amy Lynn Houck

Poor miserable mysterious color,
Not a dark, not a light, an in between.
Oh the complexity of gray in laundry.
This neutral hazy excuse for a color,
like the polluted version of white,
or the immature offspring of black.
Gloomy, uninspiring, gray surely must be
the fraternal twin of gleaming desirable silver.

In a gray room, gray senses linger in air like overcast,
damp enough to deepen your breath,
muggy enough to sting your eyes.
An old dead coat of thick gray dust
dresses a bookshelf of unused knowledge,
which plays house to a gray photograph,
...A gray girl without a smile.
Bulky furniture colors the room gray,
taking on a dead life of its own.
Gray clouds stretch whistles of wind through an old window,
the eerie draft sways the once white sheets,
stirring gray dust,
reminding us all, that time is forgotten.

Gray touches time.

As age
As wisdom, like an old man's beard,
as power, like a dark stone pathway,
forcefully planning our footsteps,
obnoxious, as a gray seagull
stealing my sandwich crumbs, as well as my privacy on a sandy
beach shore.

Damn the gray seagull!

Interrupting the black and white rigidity in my ignorant world of

perfection,
forcing me to see things as they truly are.

My eyes gaze up my mountain of hopes,
till I see a gray stormy sky,
which casts out gray sounds like the surprise of thunder in a
convertible with a broken top,
playing Simon Says with chilling gray rain,
dripping gray water spots of smeared ink on my morning
newspaper,
smudging the lies,
developed by gray minds of people unable to see past what they
know,
more blind than the actual eyes of the blind,
but better off than those with gray hearts, who do not know who
they are.

We are born opening our eyes to the white light of this world
and die closing them to black darkness...
We are not born with gray minds
but die with them,
as we cloud our abilities with gray standards and gray walls,
un-wanting to explore any unfamiliar gray area,
until we ourselves, unknowingly turn gray.
Even in death, we never break the blind borders that confine us.
Our perception remains gray,
Always attempting to look beneath the surface,
When really
We need to look at the same surface differently.
This world remembers us by what we did,
instead of who we were...
Sooner or later,
No one is ever known
And we all become...
nothing
but gray.

her (part II)

Jon Holt

The Tomb

Morgan Hugo

When noticing the dripping mud,
On her decaying white wedding dress,
She lets out a cry, and shouts,
“Don’t you hear it!”

Rapidly breathing in and out,
I begin to shake her and shout,
“Antigone, what are you talking about?”

In a whisper, Antigone responds,
“Can you not hear?
They are acting like gods and mining souls.”

Her hands clasp the fly that is buzzing from above
The buzzing stops:
another soul now joins her and me.

Eve

Morgan Hugo

Your face, shiny, glossy,
Covered with sweat.
Grinned at me, And said,
"I'm glad that we fucked."
And my face, sticky with god knows what,
Replied, "Yes, we should do it again, just call me sometime."
And during this time, the brain, that controls my face,
Remembers the phrases that you yelled at me:
"You dirty little girl, you cunt, you slut
you want it harder, you want it stronger, you want it faster,
Let me just stick it into you."
And this brain is also contemplating,
"How much longer will this game be played on
until I throw in these chips and realize that I should not keep you."

her (part II)

Jon Holz

You know, if someone ever got ahold of one of these writings they would think I had split personalities or something, or at least wonder who the hell I was writing this for. It's like a journal entry meets a short story. Ha, it's the kind of story they turn into Lifetime network movies. HAHA, I should send them a few of these ramblings and maybe they'd make a chick flick about my retarded passion for writing random nothings. Just kidding, I'd rather be shot in the foot than be published on Lifetime. What the hell am I talking about? This always happens, I start thinking about her, and end up writing about myself.

Why do I still think about her, and write about her? I honestly don't know completely, but I often times think I have an idea. She was the first girl I really think I actually loved. Ooooo the L word right. I was what, 13 years old or some shit right? How could it be love? You wanna know how? I think it was love because I never stopped thinking about her. I think it was love because she was always there for me, and I know for a fact that I always was and always will be there for her. I think it's love because all I ever wanted was for her to be happy. Define love... you can't so don't even bother trying. I loved her then, and I still do. I always will. Everything is always a comparison to her. Never have I been that comfortable or happy with anyone else. Yeah, I dated and loved other girls, but we fought about every little thing. I'm not saying that that she and I didn't fight, because we did, we definitely did. But our fights were petty, and usually because we both wanted each other, but couldn't have it for some reason or another. We didn't fight about what to do at night, or where to eat, or anything stupid like that. Cuddling with her was like leaving the surrounding world we lived in. Yeah, sappy and romantic right? But I'm not even joking. I remember every minute of lying on the couch with her in my arms. I could have lain there forever. So cliché and I know it, but I mean every fucking word of it. Whoa F bomb in there. It's modernism, I can do that remember.

Ha. Wow, it's been almost an hour since I started this. Not the longest yet, and certainly not the shortest. I remember writing for about 3 hours one night. I almost read that one. I always "almost" read them. Maybe I'll read this one tonight, and laugh at all my typos and comma splices and missing/incorrect punctuation. That's right, I will find all those if I read this because I'm a fucking English nerd, a god damned English nerd... and guess what? I love it. It's the best change I ever made in my life. Math sucks. That's it, it just sucks. Ok so the best change? That might be an exaggeration. I've made a lot of changes in my life, and most importantly more recently. I'm bouncing back from three or four years of being lost in my own mind, and it is starting to feel all right. I think that's why I keep thinking about her, because before my dad passed away, and I slipped into this fucking waste of life state of mind, I thought about her all the time. I got to see her every day. I miss that. I miss seeing her. If I got to see her every day without even speaking to her, it would make my life a thousand times better. I haven't seen her in so long. So so long.

Hilary Duff is on Conan right now. Teenage whore. Anyway, I don't just miss seeing her. I miss talking to her. We used to be able to talk for hours. About what? Nothing. Absolutely nothing, but everything all at once. I remember one night when we talked on the phone super late at night, or early in the morning you could say. We had to be all quiet. Why? Her parents... are a little more... reserved?? than mine. Maybe strict is the word I'm looking for, but I think reserved works. Her parents... they don't like me. She used to tell me all the time that they had no problem with me, but I know her dad never liked me. It's the whole youngest daughter talking to an older boy maybe. I like him though. I respect him. He was great friends with my father, and my dad thought highly of him. He plays the drums, her father, not mine, mine played the bugle horn. Her dad... is good. No questions about it. I respect him as a great musician. I hope to be able to play as completely as he does someday. Her mom, kick ass lady hands down. I always liked her mom, and I think her mom may have been decently fond of me. More fond than her dad anyway.

Haha, I make myself laugh. I'm so retarded. Why talk about her family? I have no idea. I guess I always wanted her to know that I cared about her family, and not just her. Her brother, Chris, looked up to me I think. Chris, he plays the drums too. Honestly, this kid could not keep a beat when he started playing the drum set. I tried to help him with the little stuff, and I know his dad must have helped him with a lot too. Why do I know that? The last time I saw him play... he was 100 times better than I remembered. Chris is a strong kid. He has overcome a lot in his life. A lot more than kids his age should have to overcome. Chris inspires me, because he never seems to give up. He deals with the cards life has given him, and he pushes on through everything. It's a shame more people don't see that kid the way I do. I hope I was a positive role model to that kid, because I know someday he's going to do something great with himself. I have always kept him in my thoughts. Thoughts, not prayers.

I don't pray. Do I believe? I don't even know anymore. I figure, what difference does it make what people believe in? We're all here, and we all have to deal with the same issues. I figure, if you want to use religion or God to help get you through this fiasco that we call life, then more power to you. What do I use? That's a tough one. I think I use a combination of things. Running for one. Running gets me through a lot. And family. I have the strongest most kick ass mom in the whole world. I don't know where I would be without her. She keeps me going. I have a 10-year-old sister, 10 years old now. Where did the years go? She motivates me not to let myself down. She's going to be a great basketball player someday, because right now she's kicking the boy's asses.

See, I did it again. Started talking about her, and ended up talking about me. Maybe it's because she means so much to me that I can connect my life to her? Whoa...that's a little bit deep. Scratch that. I don't know why I start talking about myself. Maybe I use these ramblings as a self reflection or something. It always happens, and I'm always amazed by it. Like I said, I'm a retard. It's 1:30 in the morning now and I managed to work my way onto the blankness of the screen titled 4 at the bottom. Ha, creative huh? Blankness means page in case I confused you. You know what's

really amazing? I'm on page 4, or blankness 4 hahaha, anyway, and I haven't even said her name yet. I don't say it, because I don't need to say her name, because I know who I'm talking about and no else would care anyway. It's almost more fun to say her, or she, or some other pronoun than it is to say her name. Saying her name is something that Shakespeare could have written in the 1500's, but I'm a modernist remember? I can write a whole fricken novel without giving you her name if that's what I want to do.

Miscarriage

Allison Armentrout

I am drowning in the rotting corpses
of children born of Grief and Anger
killed by the glinting gash of lonely light
that brought hope
for a short while.
Their rest disturbed, they come bobbing
bloated to the surface
cracked skin spilling putrid waste into my brain.
The acid stench eats away the illusion
of peace.
I gather them and hold them close,
wishing they had never been born.

Better Luck Next Time

Katherine Kournovsky

She noticed the holes in the drain at the bottom of the sink for the first time. She continued to slurp the water out of her hand, letting it drip down her chin and settle into her gray sweatshirt. Appearance never mattered much to her, except when it mattered to everyone else, of course. *Time to go back.* She walked out of the bathroom and returned to what seemed to be one of her many different lives. She sat down behind the desk and stared out of the over-sized window across the room. It was foggy and damp out. The trees looked like dead spirits and she half expected to see bodies hanging from them. That's what kind of day it was. She sighed. Life always seemed to be happening around her while she sat, staring out windows, wondering why the weather couldn't be more encouraging. I suppose that was her problem.

She glanced at the clock. She had let her mind wander in the fog for long enough; it was time for her to go. She grabbed her coat and book bag and walked out of the door, not bothering to say goodbye to her boss like she usually did.

She paused for a few seconds outside of the door. The building next door sank into the ground and was devoured by the open earth as she looked at it. Several people slipped into the large cracks as they opened up beneath them. Shrieks and cries for help echoed in her ear. She walked past it all angrily. *Why can't it, for once, be me?*

She was never one for living life to other people's standards, except when she was, of course. She walked across the large red bricks, passing the clock and made her way to her dorm room. Once the elevator brought her to her floor, she got off and walked down the hall. She glanced at the pictures on each door, as she always did. She saw faces of people she vaguely knew, laughing at her. Each picture was alive and the subjects in them all pointed and sneered, if they bothered to look at her at all. She stared ahead and kept walking. *Just one of those days.*

She unlocked the door and went in. Dirty clothes lined the floor, which was in desperate need of vacuuming. Empty yogurt containers and banana peels cluttered her desk. She stood in the doorway for a few seconds, observing the side of the room that was uninhabited. *Home*. She grabbed her books and walked out of her room.

Outside it was raining harder than it had been earlier. She looked at the people scurrying around, trying to keep dry. She had a hood on the back of her coat, but no will to pull it up and over her head. She walked quickly across the street and avoided eye contact with the people that passed by her. She walked up a small hill and gazed intently at the scenery she admired every day. It was usually her source of hope. Today it looked dead. The natural beauty that lent her strength every day had dwindled down to damp, dark, depressing little hills. She knew what it meant.

She quickly approached her destination. Inside she walked down the hall and into her classroom. Everyone was in their seats, laughing and talking to one another. The professor was getting her presentation ready. *Dammit, late*. She couldn't stand not being the first one in the room. All eyes were on her, seeing that she was dripping wet, even though there were really no eyes on her at all. She sat down and tensed up as she took her notebook out of her book bag. The professor began to lecture. She drew various designs on her notebook, symmetrical pictures, geometric shapes, and smiley faces. None of it really required any kind of artistic ability. Thirty minutes into the lecture, the professor said something that brought her attention back to the class. "According to his studies, suicide was much more likely to occur amongst rich, white men." She had the urge to grab all of her belongings and walk out of the classroom, but she didn't want to draw attention to herself. She sat tense and unmoving for the rest of the lecture.

Once class ended, she hurried down the hall and into the bathroom. Entering the handicap stall, she removed her coat and book bag and set them on the floor. She sat on the floor and opened her book bag. She took a small, folded piece of paper out of it and began unfolding. The light above gleamed in the reflective metal. She moved her thumbnail along the blade,

chipping dried, red flakes off the edge. She rolled her sleeve up carefully, so as not to hit her previous wounds. She found a clean spot on her arm and quickly drew the blade across it. She stared. *Nothing*. Seconds later, a small, barely visible line of red appeared. It grew bigger and bigger until the line turned into a drop. It ran down her arm and dripped onto the floor. She repeated the process several times, waiting after each time to make sure that each produced a drop.

She placed the blade back into the paper, folded it back up, and put it back into her book bag. She watched the blood as it dried on her arm. She did not move to wipe it. Slowly she placed her head on the floor and took note of how the world looked from the floor. The sound of stalls opening and closing, toilets flushing, and feet shuffling echoed in her ear as she fell asleep.

She woke up, startled. She realized where she was and then she relaxed. She looked at her arm and then the floor. Quickly, she wet some toilet paper and cleaned her arm, tenderly. She stood up and walked out of the bathroom. She walked back down the hall and out the door. *It's dark*. The streetlights shone bright as she began her trek, back to her room. *Better luck next time*.

Something Reassuring For Once

Joe Callahan

There is something out there
That waits
In devastating anticipation

For you to perform the simplest of duties,

And thinks that your every action
Is a celebration.

One Man's Attempts to Transform the Mind

Morgan Hugo

Drip, drop, drop, drip Drop— He was throwing rocks into the pond again. Ripples formed in the pond. Few tourists were there today; those who were there were taking pictures, of course. He came here as often as he could. He was dreading to take his class here. They were studying Emerson and Thoreau, though. He slowly stood up, looked around, and quickly sat back down. He was shivering as always. Why was he always cold? He went to the doctor about it. The doctor said that he was depressed and suggested that he might want to try biofeedback.

Was he really depressed? Yes, he has had his share of setbacks, failed marriages, and divorces. A young woman was writing in her journal. He wondered if she was hoping to be published. He began remembering the time when he was nineteen and when he applied to the College of Charleston. He heard great things about its writing program for budding young authors. He would pray every night that they would accept him. He thought that if they accepted him, he would be published. That was his dream. One hot sunny day he went to the mailbox and tore open the envelope that was addressed to him. It was from the college; he was accepted. He called everyone whom he knew: his college writing professor, Dr. Duffie, his fellow English Majors, and his family. Sam and Joy took him out to dinner.

The writing program did not happen. They called him a week later and told him that he received the wrong message and that unfortunately he was not accepted. He decided to lie to his fellow English majors and tell them that he decided not to attend. He could not bear to tell them the truth. He only told his college professor and girlfriend the truth. The professor gave him a hug and his girlfriend told him that he would always be a failure, and she walked away for good.

Drip, drop, drip drop— Puddles are forming in the pond: puddles where Henry David Thoreau lived. He patted his protruding stomach that seemed to be growing larger every day.

He felt regret for not bringing his running shoes. He did not have much time to eat. His daily menu consisted of crackers and whatever else he could find in the faculty vending machine. He was always grading papers, always reading, always attending lectures and faculty suppers and events. He could lie to his students and fellow faculty member and tell them that “due to a ‘family emergency’ he could not perform these certain tasks.”

He flipped through the only book that he brought with him. It was by the Dalai Lama and was called Transforming the Mind. He felt as if he needed to feel reconnected to something. He could not rely on the emptiness of one-night stands, work, and grading papers. One theme in this book was about non-attachment. This was something that he was trying to do. He told himself at least he made the valid attempt to stop reliving events over and over in his head. Reliving him did not do him any good. These memories of childhood, love, death, marriage, and divorce made him sad because either the event itself was sad, or the event was happy and would never happen again. This one event, although trivial it might seem to other individuals, he could not escape from:

One day in his faculty mailbox, he received a note: “Meet me in Harvard Square at 4pm.” It was signed, “Lauren.” He knew a Lauren. She was sweet, intelligent, and extremely beautiful. He went there. She saw him, and acknowledged him, by giving him a smile, but nothing else happened. She did not even go over to talk to him. Dr. Carl Barnwell was also in the Square. Dr. Barnwell taught theatre. Dr. Carl Barnwell was popular, younger-looking, energetic, and not overweight. Lauren did not go over to him. Lauren went over to Carl. Just like the time when he was momentarily happy about being accepted to the College of Charleston, yet to realize that it was a joke, he was again let down; he received the wrong message, yet again. He thought that maybe this time he could have yelled out, “what about the note Lauren? I’m better than Carl, or Dr. Barnwell as you call him.” He did not, though. Regret started to consume him again ...

Non-attachment, non-attachment, non-attachment to the past— How is he supposed to do it? The Dalai Lama said to “follow the way” and yet, he knew that it was impossible. He

thought that maybe he will always be stuck at receiving the wrong messages.

He decided to examine what he does have: After countless years of trying, he is a professor of American Literature at Harvard. Those people at the College of Charleston have read his works. In fact, they invited him to lead a writing workshop there. Still, these thoughts did not make him content. Maybe he should have pursued acting and not English. As an undergrad, he was a theatre minor, performed in all of the plays, and traveled around performing for shows such as "Black Broadway." Why did he choose English? While thinking about it, he realized that the only semi-logical rationale is that English sounded more lucrative at the time.

It felt as if it was going to rain. The sky was becoming cloudy and dark. He felt a cool breeze. He decided to stop throwing rocks in the pond. Was Thoreau happy? Did he realize what an impact that he made on others? Now people come to this pond, he thought to himself. He noticed the t-shirts that had the quotes from Walden Pond. He wondered, what would Henry think about that? Would Henry think that these consumers were receiving the wrong messages that was intended for someone else? Realizing again that he would receive the wrong message, he felt the metal object that was in the pocket of his trench coat. Taking it out, his fingers traced its shape, and its coolness enticed him. Wondering if the only way one could be nonattached and not receive wrong message was to end one's life, he placed the metal object to his temple. Hesitating, he brought the object down, and he placed it back in his pocket. No, no, he thought to himself, I will not do it during this time and at this sacred place.

It began to rain, and he packed up his book, reached into his pant's pocket and took out the keys to his SUV, and proceeded to stand up so that he could travel back home.

her (part III)

Jon Holz

Perfect. If I had to use one word to describe my time with her, it would be perfect. Blah blah nothing's perfect. Whatever you cliché assfuck. We were perfect in my eyes and that's all that matters. I think we were perfect in hers too. Last night, she told me that she still thinks about me on those lonely nights, and for some reason I felt good and bad about that. I felt good because I certainly think about her on those nights, but I felt bad because I feel like I bring her down when she thinks of the past. I want her to be happy. I always wanted her to be happy. I still want her to be happy. That's why I feel bad that she still thinks about me.

You know what I wish? I wish that I could just spend one night with her. Not a sexual encounter like half the sick fucks in America would immediately think, but just a night together. Maybe dinner at a small restaurant, nothing big and fancy where I actually have to put shoes on. I hate shoes. Sandals year round for me, even when it's like 10 degrees and snowing. Ideally, we would cuddle up and watch a movie. What movie? I don't even care what movie because I'm pretty positive I wouldn't be paying any attention to it. I just want to lie there with her. After the movie? I just want to fall asleep with her in my arms, because that is something I NEVER got to do. Capital letters? Modernism remember... just go with it. Why do I want to spend this time with her? Because I think about it all the time and I've been thinking about since I graduated high school. She's a different person now, and I'm a totally different person now. I want to see if there is anything still there. I know I know, the instant response is how could there be right? It's been way too long and we're too different now. The problem I have with thinking this, is that I passed up all my opportunities in the past. Life is too short as I have begun to realize, and I guess I've just got that "you never know until you try" kind of attitude.

It's a waste of effort to even think of it, because I know it will never happen. I wish for it all the time, and I even dream about it. That's what led me to the conclusion that dreams are merely wasted ambitions. My ambitions: to spend one night with her just to see what, if anything, is still there. BUT, that's just a dream you see, and therefore it becomes a wasted ambition. No more wasted than writing an eight-page ramble no one will ever read right?

Maybe I'll actually email her this one? She told me I could email her anytime I wanted. Nah, I'm pretty sure she wouldn't even want to read this, and I'm pretty sure I know the reaction it would get. She'd be sad at first, when she thought about everything we went through. But then, she'd give me that "Jon... It was so long ago... and we're different people now" speech. It's ok though, because I already know that. I said it was a dream remember. I said I knew we would never be where we could have been.

A dream. My dream. A gathering of wasted ambitions. But I can't seem to change my dream. I can't seem to find new ambitions. It goes and it comes, but it's always the same dream. Sometimes more often than other times. But still the same dream. Still the same wasted ambitions. Still her. Still writing this shit? Enough for one night I think. I miss being **comfortable**. I miss her. I miss her more than these eight pages could ever express.

Thank Your Inspiration Bitch

Tabitha Vanderpool

Beautiful talent, found in music, what a gift!
Freddy Krueger striped shirt, matching left sock.
The right: more like a sweet candy cane lift;
Of striping in pink

Little Black Jacket covering your breasts,
Mostly held shut, only the sweet center open,
Small white suspender, teasing, pleasing, I imagine the rest...
My dirty-clean thoughts suddenly broken,

"Check, Check" Returning to what covers,
Glamour pink belt, like Jem's rocking dress, above curve hugging
blue jeans,
Even chunky black boots don't stop the sexy shaped movers
From grooving to the beat of your dreams,

Atop the shin, stops the boots.
Should have been flesh to knee, concealing socks.
Above footwear, straps held bottom blue roots
On a journey that docks,

Low on the waist,
Looking up and up still,
Under the side turned conductors hat, colored dreads frame the
face,
Glitter gold tears, sparkling spill,

Over dampening cheeks,
Lips let truth pass at your will.
The more you sing, your soul leaks,
For my eyes to witness, thrill!

Glisten dew starts to drip,
Running over that soft flesh exposing
Rainbow shimmers pave the trip,
Innocently seducing,

Downward beads roll on air exposed skin.
Please keep on shining, ceasing when reaching the end.
Following your natural curves, flowing, O heavenly sin,
To be that drop of sweat, rounding your bend,

Between the mounds, all female,
Damping places, I can not see.
Every move, carrying detail,
Easy, smooth, flowing notes flying free,

The telling your story, passionate sounds with meaning.
As each moment passes your beauty shines brighter.
Casting, ejecting rays to the crowd, blinding, I see nothing.
But now I understand, women need to fight for their right to be a
believer.

Chords high, chords low, while keeping it real, voicing your itch,
Found loves, lost loves, I'm in love with an artist,
Woman, proud, out front of the crowd, call her Bitch.
Standing, shouting, "It's okay to be feminist."

We spoke, no joke. No performer could be nicer.
So close, don't choke, "I loved the show,"
Coming face to face, amazing singer,
Stumbling lips, I praise and want to know.

"What do you call your balls?"
My face feels hot, I'm an idiot.
She smiles, "Kashaka," I think I might fall
One foot to another, thinking I should sit.

But I stand still and speaking.

“Perfect for a drum circle,”

We brush arm to arm, still braving fear, seeking

More time, must extend the tick tock cycle,

Of this on going rhyme, African beat, I smile laughter.

My dimples are exploding, “You’re the best!”

As your long starlet arm reaches out after

Stamped blue butterfly between my chest,

Fingers brush flesh as you finger my glass,

Stung on hemp, my totem is strong.

Recalling the gift shop, “I just couldn’t pass.”

Selfishly, I kept talking. Knowing it was wrong;

To not want to share you, damn the circling mob,

Reluctantly, shifting, speaking to writing,

Not wanting an end, heart crying, internal sob,

Knowing it won’t be long, don’t stop the signing.

Handing the new purchased gift, reminder your talent,

I watch you, want you, slide my cover open, stroking

Permanent marking, making love so silent,

Envyng others watched, waiting.

Orgasmic excitement bursts through the air,

Sharing, what on stage, forgotten,

“Come see me in Philly, you all can be there.”

Gently returning, spoiling me rotten.

Intimacy, I’m moved. Reading, out of the crowd,

My Eyes must be gleaming, beaming delight!

Your writing, feeling luscious, voicing aloud,

I could not believe. O such a sight.

My thoughts, wishes to you, wrote to me.

“Play on, beauty! *Large heart, Bitch XOXO”

Like déjà vu I can't believe, but see.
Your message making this feeling, O, O...

I'm coming. Unforgettable, numbing pleasure, tickling my ear,
Your echoes sounding, imprinting memory,
Variety, in voice, playing instruments, I hear,
All your courage to stand up without any fear, Fuck sensory!

Torn

(lyrics from The Smashing Pumpkins "thirty-three")

Josh Wooten

Self mutilation
comes with every run.
Each race I run,
I stop and reflect,
is this pain what I want?

"mysteries not ready to reveal"

I love it,
but I hate it.
I can't decide.

"speak to me in a language I can hear"

Some days
I feel like my feet
are landing on clouds.
Floating towards infinity,
my body can reach the horizon.

"and for a moment I lose myself
wrapped up in the pleasures of the world"

Then again,
there are days where all I can do
is shuffle my legs and scrape the pavement.

Every mile tears at my long legs.
Each breath burns inside my chest.

"the earth laughs beneath my heavy walk"

I keep running—
searching for the answer.
At times, I don't understand,
and I cry.

"so I pull my cover up and face the cold"

It may hurt,
but my teammates understand.
Their bodies yelling with mine,
we become closer as we share
exhaustion.

"I've journeyed here and there and back again
but in the same old haunts I still find my friends"

I go on
"tomorrow's just an excuse
running
and you can make it
every day.
last forever."

Independence Day

Allison Armentrout

A large gray farmhouse sat back from the dusty little road. The front porch sagged badly on one side, the steps leaning precariously forward in anticipation of the day they would completely detach. A faded and ragged flag hung limply from a pillar that stood with the weight of the roof on its weary shoulders, an Atlas slowly being pressed into submission. It was hot and humid even though thick clouds layered the skies like slabs of concrete, so the windows gaped open. Curtains once ivory now undulated in dingy waves, set in motion by the oscillating fan whirring feebly in an unseen corner, and paint chips lay in crumbly profusion beneath the front windows and in the grass around the perimeter of the house. Under the eaves and around the drooping gutters mold grew unchecked. The front lawn was littered with chickens pecking about in the sparse, gray grass for anything edible, and little wisps of dust plumed up from the ground and dissipated into the still air with each stab they made at the hard earth. Among them sat a small child of seven or eight. Her dark, stringy hair hung in greasy locks about her shoulders, just barely touching the drab and dirty light blue t-shirt she wore. A pair of matching terry cloth shorts were more brown than blue. Tears left muddy trails through the dust that covered her face like fine soot. She swiped at them angrily and examined the blood that came away on her small hand. It was the only color in her otherwise drab world, and it seemed to give the impetus she needed to move. She stood up and removed all her clothing, carefully folding it just as Daddy had taught her, and she left it in a neat pile on the ground where she had been sitting. She walked naked to the decomposing gate that clung desperately to its supporting post by one rusty nail, and she turned, just once, to gaze dispassionately on the house where they had moved after Mommy remarried. Then she pushed open the protesting gate and walked through. It began to rain, but she did not look back.

Ignorance

Allison Armentrout

It wasn't so much that Frank was cruel, although he was; it was more that his cruelty took the form of simply ignoring the fact that she existed. She would rather have his taunts and his condescension than have nothing at all. In those times, when he was ignoring her, she could hardly breathe. It was as though a vacuum was created around her that was void of everything that made life worth living. She had no friends; Frank had scared away the one or two who had come around when they first moved into the neighborhood. Not that he had jumped out of the bushes yelling "Boo!" or had come at them brandishing weapons. He had done the same thing to them that he did to her: he simply ignored them. When the doorbell rang, he ignored it. When she opened the door and admitted them to the house, he ignored them, ignored their greetings, not even so much as a look. As they chatted in the warm, sunny kitchen, he would pace back and forth through it, from the dining room, to the living room, through the kitchen, and around again, ignoring them with his constant presence. When they left and said careful goodbyes, he ignored them. Ignored her, too, until they left. Then he would start. He would tell her that her friends were stupid, that she was stupid for having stupid friends. He would tell her that she obviously had no consideration for them, letting them into such a messy house, although everything gleamed, that she had no consideration for him, letting them feel sorry for him for having married such a slob. He would tell her that he wished he had never married her, that Helen Shmeig had wanted to marry him in the worst way, and she, unlike her, was slim and beautiful and still desirable. He would threaten divorce, and she would silently pray that he would file the paperwork as soon as possible. But he never did. Through all this, he failed to notice that her clothes were beginning to hang from her body as though they had been carelessly tossed over a chair. He failed to notice that the muscles in her arms and legs were beginning to tighten up, that she had given up her favorite Ben and Jerry's ice

cream, that the quiet look of desperation had left her face, that each of his derogatory remarks elicited a brief flare in eyes no longer defined by a dead flatness.

When the police came, they found Frank lying on the kitchen floor, blood pooling under his head from a broken nose and widening across his white shirt under his tie where her favorite kitchen knife was solidly buried. Robin was waiting out on the deck, her back to the kitchen, the sun glinting off her blonde hair. In response to the silent question in every eye, she simply answered with a quiet shrug, "He was ignorant."

Remember

For Barbara

Stephanie Stambaugh

Struggling up the wet earth of a mountain I labored to get as far away from your grave as I could and my darling I keep climbing, past a flooded crevasse, a snow laden pass and falling rocks by the wayside waiting for an earth mover that could not even stop the Donner Party ghosts from warning me that the pain would not pass, like the pain I felt when David chose the girl in D.C., when Vicki was raped and broken, when I read your confession letter, the daily paper and those silent faces, but I never stopped loving you, remember?

And I had to keep going, knowing that someday your son would hate the red carnations I gave the family to lay upon your ashes, protesting, he said you never wanted adornments, he was wrong, just like he was wrong that I wouldn't remember all his failings just when he thought they all died with you and your blackened lungs and the gangrene that devoured you like an angry spirit conjured from a dark spell, the doctor's eyes blind, begging you to fight, praying for their sake you would cast out the demon like a self exorcism as they whispered my goodbye in your ear, remember?

And there I was crying from the other side of the mountain sitting at the end of my unmade bed, holding the phone telling you to go, just go, fly, to be free, to dance and a year later you did dance the day my first son was born, cut from my body to save me from joining you, but instead you sent down the white feather you promised, as John Lennon promised Julian and I kept waiting but it was your son who found the feather and I was beset with my dream of Mary ripping my chest suppurating my pain as she poured her blinding light into me and you reached the other side as

she healed the heart you said would fall to pieces when you died, remember?

You wrote that revelation in the steno pad I found in the living room, the house still smelling of overripe bananas from the kitchen where Grandma Whitson's Depression glass plate sat, green, chipped but still beautiful, as beautiful as you were the day I first watched you in the mirror, red lips, curlers, white lace slip, cigarette smoke snaking along the wall, and you were alive and perfect with all your imperfections, bad marriages, embezzlement, Jerry Lee records, alive from marching against the KKK, school board fights, hate for my dad, hate for injustice, driving home to see me waiting at the window, remember?

